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ABSTRACT

Two NIE objectives are to increase educational opportunities by addressing issues of educational equity, and to improve educational practice. Educational equity involves reducing the predictive value of race, sex, and social class in determining educational achievement. There are three major problems in improving urban education: (1) lack of credibility of urban education researchers; (2) methodological weaknesses in educational research; and (3) the study of issues surrounding the identification and replication of successful school practices. It is noted by the Director of NIE that fortunately there is a growing trust between research organizations and urban school systems. In addition, a variety of research methodologies are increasingly being used to study urban education. Finally, there is a growing awareness of the problems involved in replicating the characteristics present in successful urban schools to other schools. What can be done once these successful examples of urban schooling are identified remains a challenge for urban education researchers. (Author/AM)

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Address by

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to

CONFERENCE ON URBAN EDUCATION

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FOR COGNITIVE LEARNING

MADISON, WISCONSIN

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I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE THIS MORNING, AS YOU MAY KNOW, URBAN EDUCATION IS ONE OF FOUR AREAS ALONG WITH TEACHING, SECONDARY EDUCATION, AND ACHIEVEMENT TESTING WHICH WE HAVE IDENTIFIED AT NIE AS TOPICS FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION DURING THE YEARS AHEAD, OF COURSE, THESE ARE BROAD TOPICS; OF COURSE, THEY OVERLAP; AND OF COURSE, THEY ARE EXTREMELY COMPLICATED,

I THINK IT IMPORTANT TO TAKE JUST A MOMENT TO OUTLINE FOR YOU THE TWO OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES WHICH HAVE EMERGED FROM OUR INTERNAL DELIBERATIONS AND FROM OUR CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE: NAMELY, INCREASING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES BY ADDRESSING ISSUES OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY, AND IMPROVING LOCAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE, IT IS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THESE TWO OBJECTIVES THAT OUR WORK IN URBAN EDUCATION MUST BE VIEWED,

OUR DEFINITION OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IS A CONCERN FOR REDUCING THE PREDICTIVE VALUE OF RACE, SEX, AND SOCIAL CLASS IN DETERMINING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT. THIS MISSION IS FUNDAMENTAL IN OUR MANDATE FROM CONGRESS, THE PARTICULAR

ROLE OF A NATIONAL RESEARCH AGENCY IN THIS EFFORT IS TO CONTRIBUTE KNOWLEDGE OF MANY TYPES AND IN MANY FORMS, NIE HAS SPONSORED BASIC RESEARCH IN AREAS SUCH AS THE PARTICULAR LEARNING PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY RACIAL MINORITIES AND BILINGUAL STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS THE BROAD AREAS IN WHICH SEX DISCRIMINATION OR SEXUAL STEREOTYPES AFFECT TEACHING AND LEARNING, AND WE HAVE SUPPORTED POLICY ANALYSIS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN THE EQUITY AREA,

A PARTICULAR CONCERN IN THIS AREA IS THAT THE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH COMMUNITY FREQUENTLY LACKS THE PERSPECTIVES AND COMMITMENTS OF WOMEN AND MINORITY PERSONS. IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IS BOTH SO DIFFICULT AND SO IMPORTANT THAT WE CANNOT RELY ON THE TALENT FOUND IN ONLY ONE PART OF THE SOCIETY, BUT WE MUST REACH OUT TO THE TALENT THAT EXISTS IN ALL SEGMENTS OF THE SOCIETY IN ORDER TO GET THE IMPROVEMENTS IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE THAT WE NEED. TO THIS END, WE HAVE DEVELOPED PROJECTS TO ENCOURAGE ABLE WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN CAREERS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TO BE AWARE OF AND SEEK SUPPORT FROM THE INSTITUTE'S PROGRAMS AND COMPETITIONS.

THE SECOND MISSION OF NIE IS A COMMITMENT TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE. AS IN THE CASE OF EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, WE INTEND THAT THIS GOAL

SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN EVERY ASPECT OF OUR ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAM. WE WILL STRIVE TO INSURE THAT ALL OF OUR WORK IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO IMPROVEMENT OF LOCAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND WE MUST ADMIT THAT SUCH HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE WITH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN THE PAST. AS AN HISTORIAN OF EDUCATION, I CAN TELL YOU THE CLAIM THAT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IS "TOO THEORETICAL" HAS BEEN PERSISTENT THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY. IT IS SO PERVASIVE THAT FOR MANY, ESPECIALLY FOR PRACTITIONERS, THE VERY TERM "EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH" HAS COME TO CARRY WITH IT CONNOTATIONS OF IRRELEVANCE.

IN THE FIELD OF RESEARCH ABOUT URBAN EDUCATION WE MUST BE MORE THAN ORDINARILY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF MAKING OUR WORK DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF LOCAL PRACTICE AND TO THE ENORMOUSLY COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF INCREASING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY.

IN MY VIEW, WE FACE AT LEAST THREE MAJOR PROBLEMS AS WE GO ABOUT OUR DIFFICULT MISSION IN URBAN EDUCATION. THE FIRST IS THE DIFFICULTY WE FACE IN MAKING OURSELVES CREDIBLE. THERE IS NO DENYING THAT THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY IS VIEWED WITH PARTICULAR SUSPICION IN THE AREA OF URBAN EDUCATION. WHETHER OR NOT THESE SUSPICIONS ARE JUSTIFIED, THE TRUTH IS THAT URBAN PRACTITIONERS OFTEN FEEL THAT THEY HAVE BEEN "STUDIED TO DEATH" WITH NO APPARENT POSITIVE

RESULT, URBAN EDUCATION IS, AFTER ALL, NOT A NEW PRESERVE FOR WANDERING MARAUDERS FROM THE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH COMMUNITY. IT WILL TAKE CAREFULLY DESIGNED COLLABORATIVE EFFORT IF WE ARE TO BE SUCCESSFUL, AND IN THIS AREA, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER, IT BEHOOVES US TO KNOW WHAT HAS BEEN DONE ALREADY. I CAN IMAGINE NOTHING MORE DISASTROUS THAN ATTEMPTS TO OUTLINE "BOLD NEW DEPARTURES" IN RESEARCH ABOUT URBAN EDUCATION. THE FACT IS THAT ALMOST ANY SUCH STRATEGY WOULD BE GREATED BY AT BEST BENIGN YAWNS AND AT WORST CYNICAL SKEPTICISM,

THE SECOND PROBLEM WHICH WE MUST DEAL WITH IN AS ADROIT A MANNER AS POSSIBLE, AND WHICH I BELIEVE HAS PLAGUED US IN THE PAST, HAS TO DO WITH THE METHODOLOGY WE USE AS WE ATTEMPT TO DO OUR WORK. I HAVE SPOKEN AT SOME LENGTH AT THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION AND ELSEWHERE ABOUT MY BELIEF THAT WE MUST DEVELOP AND USE A GREATER VARIETY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES, IN URBAN EDUCATION, I BELIEVE THAT THIS REQUIREMENT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT. MY GENERAL THESIS HAS BEEN THAT LACK OF A DISCIPLINE OF EDUCATION AND STATUS INSECURITY IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH HAS LED TO A QUEST FOR METHODOLOGICAL PURITY WHICH HAS BEEN DETRIMENTAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CERTAIN KINDS OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. INDEED, QUANTITATIVE METHODS HAVE BECOME EXCEEDINGLY POPULAR IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH. FEW DISSERTATIONS AND

FEW RESEARCH ARTICLES ARE FREE OF ELABORATELY DESIGNED EMPIRICAL PROCEDURES, DRAWING UPON STATISTICAL MODELS WHICH ARE SOMETIMES FORCED BUT ALWAYS IN VOGUE. THIS EMPIRICAL EMPHASIS HAS BROUGHT RIGOR AND SOPHISTICATION TO RESEARCH IN A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES, BUT IT HAS ALSO LED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS TO LIMIT THEIR CHOICE OF RESEARCH STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES, THUS, THE STUDY OF EDUCATION HAS TAKEN ON UNSPOKEN PARAMETERS, EXCLUDING THOSE PROBLEMS AND METHODS OF STUDY WHICH DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES EASILY TO THE TRADITIONAL METHODOLOGIES. WHILE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION INDEED MUST BE RIGOROUS, THERE ARE VARIOUS ACCEPTABLE WAYS TO DEFINE SCHOLARLY RIGOR, SOME OF WHICH ARE HEAVILY QUANTITATIVE AND OTHERS THAT ARE NOT. AS WILLIAM JAMES TOLD US, NEARLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, EDUCATION IS AN ART AS WELL AS A SCIENCE. REALIZATION OF THIS FACT IS TO MY MIND EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR OUR URBAN EDUCATION WORK. FOR THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THESE PHENOMENA IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT WE MUST FOR THE FUTURE BEGIN TO BUILD A NEW SET OF EXPECTATIONS AND RESEARCH POSTURES IF WE ARE TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN ADDRESSING THE MAJOR URBAN ISSUES. I DO NOT MEAN THAT WE SHOULD LOOK FOR A SINGLE RESEARCH PARADIGM TO SERVE AS A PANACEA; NOR DO I MEAN THAT WE SHOULD ABANDON THE METHODOLOGICAL EXPERTISE AND THE SUBSTANTIVE WORK DONE AS A RESULT OF THE PRESSURES

I HAVE CITED ABOVE. WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH A SIMPLE "THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE" PROBLEM, WE ARE DEALING WITH AN ENORMOUSLY COMPLEX PROBLEM OF THEORY AND PRACTICE IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN WHICH MANY DESIRABLE OUTCOMES MAY NOT BE AS "MEASURABLE" AS THEY ARE IN MORE PURELY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.

THE REALLY "HARD" QUESTIONS INVOLVED IN URBAN EDUCATION, PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES EASILY TO THE "HARD" DISCIPLINES AND METHODOLOGIES, ARE CHALLENGING BEYOND MANY OF THE MEANS WE HAVE YET DEVISED, HOWEVER, IN RECENT YEARS RESEARCH METHODS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED WHICH DO ADDRESS DIRECTLY THE QUESTIONS OF HOW TO IMPROVE URBAN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE, RESEARCH IN CLASSROOM SETTINGS, CASE STUDIES, ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES, AND POLICY STUDIES ALL DEVIATE FROM MORE FORMAL APPROACHES, ALL MAKE GREAT DEMANDS ON INTUITION, ON "ELEGANCE" OF ANALYSIS, AND ON CONTINUING INTERACTION WITH THE URBAN SCENE,

THE THIRD AREA OF CONCERN FOR RESEARCH IN URBAN EDUCATION WHICH I THINK WE MUST ADDRESS WITH NEW RIGOR IS THE SERIES OF ISSUES AROUND THE IDENTIFICATION AND REPLICATION OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PRACTICE,

DESPITE THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM THAT URBAN SCHOOLS FAIL TO EDUCATE, THERE ARE EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS THAT HAVE

PROVEN SUCCESSFUL OVER A NUMBER OF YEARS IN PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION TO URBAN STUDENTS,

SOME OF THESE PROGRAMS ARE LOCATED IN THE REGULAR SCHOOLS OF THE SYSTEM, DRAWING STUDENTS FROM A FIXED GEOGRAPHICAL AREA. OTHERS ARE ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS WITHIN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SYSTEM. STILL OTHERS OCCUR IN PRIVATE OR PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS WHOSE STUDENT BODY IS COMPOSED LARGELY OF STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES. WE WANT TO STUDY WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE SUCCESSES OF THESE PROGRAMS, IN ORDER TO DETERMINE HOW OTHER URBAN SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS CAN BEGIN TO IMPLEMENT SOME OF THESE SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES,

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF STUDIES THAT HAVE BEEN DONE ON THIS TOPIC AND SEVERAL ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY, RARELY, HOWEVER, HAVE THEY EFFECTIVELY DEALT WITH HOW THESE SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS CAN BE STUDIED AND PRESENTED IN WAYS THAT ARE HELPFUL FOR OTHER DISTRICTS; CONSEQUENTLY, THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THESE PROGRAMS WHICH HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS SUCCESSFUL HAVE HAD MUCH OF A MULTIPLIER EFFECT. THEY TYPICALLY REMAIN IDIOSYNCRATIC EXAMPLES OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN SINGLE DISTRICTS,

WE SHOULD REVIEW THE WORK ALREADY DONE ON THIS TOPIC, COORDINATE SOME OF THESE EFFORTS IF THEY SEEM SOUND--OR BEGIN A NEW ACTIVITY IF THAT SEEMS WARRANTED--AND CONFRONT

THE PROBLEM OF HOW THE INFORMATION GLEANED FROM THESE SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS CAN BEST BE USED BY OTHER DISTRICTS,

I SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD FOCUS MOST OF OUR ATTENTION ON SCHOOLS IN AREAS WHERE MANY HAVE IN THE PAST BEEN LESS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT EDUCATIONAL SUCCESSES, AND ON SCHOOLS WHERE PER PUPIL EXPENDITURE CONFORMS WITH THE AVERAGES FOR THE AREA,

I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE NOW A NUMBER OF FACTORS WHICH MAKE ME CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO CONFRONT AND DEAL SUCCESSFULLY WITH THE PROBLEMS I HAVE OUTLINED.

WHILE IT IS STILL TRUE THAT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IS LOOKED UPON WITH SUSPICION IN OUR SCHOOLS, ESPECIALLY IN OUR URBAN SCHOOLS, IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT NEARLY EVERY LARGE SCHOOL SYSTEM NOW HAS A DIRECTOR OR OFFICE FOR RESEARCH. IN-SERVICE TRAINING OR STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SCHOOLS INSURES THAT TEACHERS AND THOSE IN THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY CAN INTERACT ON A REGULAR AND EQUAL BASIS--NOT JUST UNDER "EXPERIMENTAL" CIRCUMSTANCES. IN THE UNIVERSITIES, WHILE SOME STATUS INSECURITY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH LINGERS, JOINT EFFORTS AMONGST UNIVERSITY FACULTIES FROM MANY DISCIPLINES IS MORE COMMON THAN EVER BEFORE, AND THE LONG HISTORY OF EFFORTS BY COLLEGES AND

SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION TO BE OF REAL SERVICE TO SCHOOLS IS PRODUCING RESULTS. IN SHORT, I BELIEVE THAT THE PROBLEM OF "CREDIBILITY" OF DEVISING WAYS FOR US TO WORK MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER WITH URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO INSURE THAT WE CREATE A CLIMATE OF MUTUAL TRUST IS CLOSER TO SOLUTION THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST,

I AM ALSO ENCOURAGED THAT WE ARE BEGINNING TO BE MORE CATHOLIC IN OUR METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO PROBLEMS OF URBAN EDUCATION RESEARCH. NOT ONLY ARE WE DOING MORE WORK OF THE TYPE I OUTLINED EARLIER, BUT THE CLIMATE IN THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY IS INCREASINGLY SYMPATHETIC TO VARIOUS APPROACHES.

FINALLY, I DO THINK, AND I AM SURE YOU HAVE HEARD CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF THIS FROM FRANK CHASE AND OTHERS, THAT WE ARE MORE AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS OF REPLICATING THE CHARACTERISTICS WHICH WE FIND TO BE PRESENT IN SUCCESSFUL URBAN SCHOOLS TO OTHER SCHOOLS. I STILL BELIEVE THAT THE ISSUE OF REPLICATION -- WHAT DO WE DO ONCE WE HAVE IDENTIFIED SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF URBAN SCHOOLING -- IS THE CRUX OF THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US.

I AM ENCOURAGED BY THIS CONFERENCE AND BY INCREASING INTEREST IN URBAN EDUCATION ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO BELIEVE THAT OUR EFFORTS ARE MORE MATURE AND MORE PROMISING

THAN EVER BEFORE. I LOOK FORWARD TO GREAT PROGRESS IN
THE FUTURE,